

Drop-in Learning Sessions Estes-to-Flatiron Draft Environmental Impact Statement

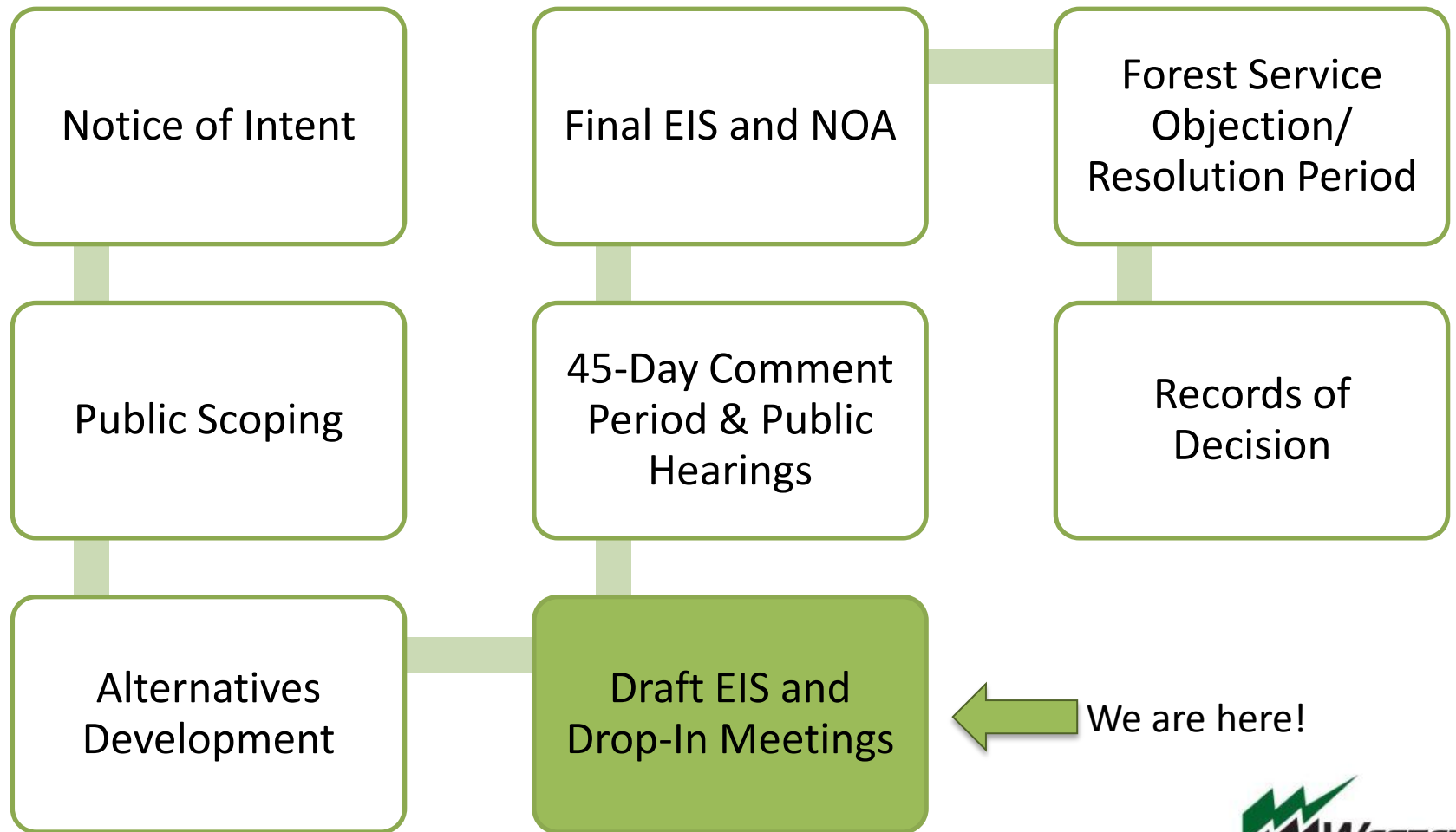


September 23 & 24, 2014

Purpose and Need

- Western Area Power Administration proposes to rebuild the electric transmission lines between Estes Park and Flatiron Reservoir.
- The transmission line rebuild project is needed to:
 - Ensure reliable and cost-effective electricity is provided to Estes Park, Loveland and other Front Range communities.
 - Improve transmission safety by updating facilities and rebuilding 60-70+ year-old transmission lines to be compliant with current standards.
 - Improve access for emergencies and line/ROW maintenance

EIS Process



What's in the EIS?

- Alternatives considered and measures taken to minimize adverse effects
- Affected Environment
 - Description of the existing environmental conditions for physical, biological, and human resources.
- Environmental Impacts
 - Direct and indirect impacts of each alternative
- Cumulative Impacts
 - Environmental impacts of the project when added to past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.

How Scoping Comments Were Addressed

Impacts of new ROW acquisition

- The amount of new ROW required was calculated for each alternative
- The amount of ROW that would be decommissioned was calculated
- The number of landowners affected by each alternative was determined

Impacts on viewsheds, including travel corridors, residential areas and recreational sites

- New routing alternatives were developed to avoid issues identified during scoping
- New design alternatives were developed, including underground construction and lower structure heights
- Visual simulations were prepared from 14 sensitive viewpoints
- Project-specific design criteria were developed to minimize impacts

How Scoping Comments Were Addressed

Impacts of road construction

- An additional transportation study was completed to identify the length of road construction in areas with difficult constructability
- Access road needs were more specifically identified

Impacts on recreational uses and experiences

- Simulations and visual analyses were conducted from major recreational use areas
- Impacts on Pole Hill Road OHV use were analyzed

How Scoping Comments Were Addressed

Impacts on protected areas

- The number of protected areas crossed by each alternative was determined

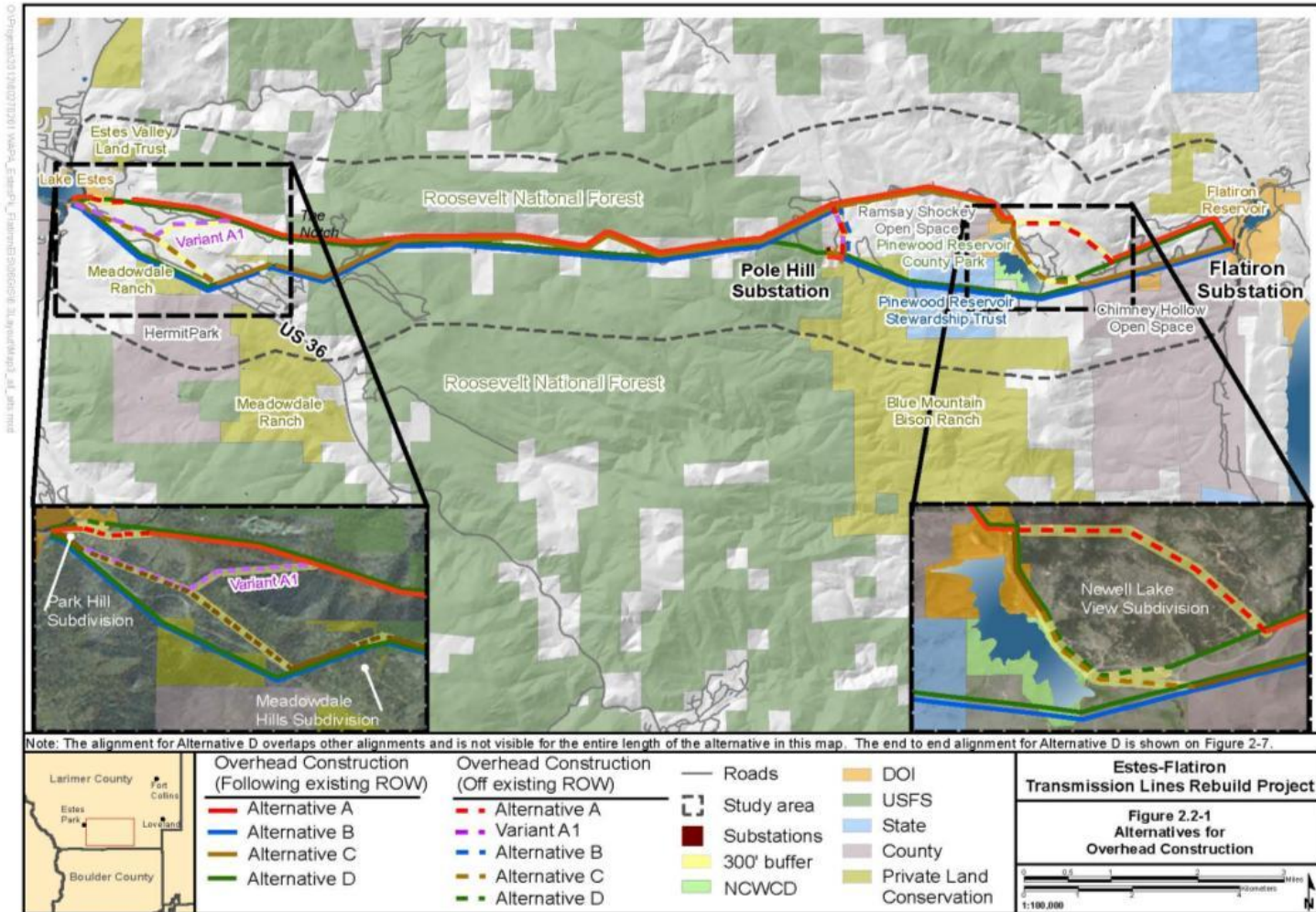
Impacts on existing infrastructure, e.g. Upper Thompson Sanitation District

- Re-routes were developed to avoid conflicts with this facility

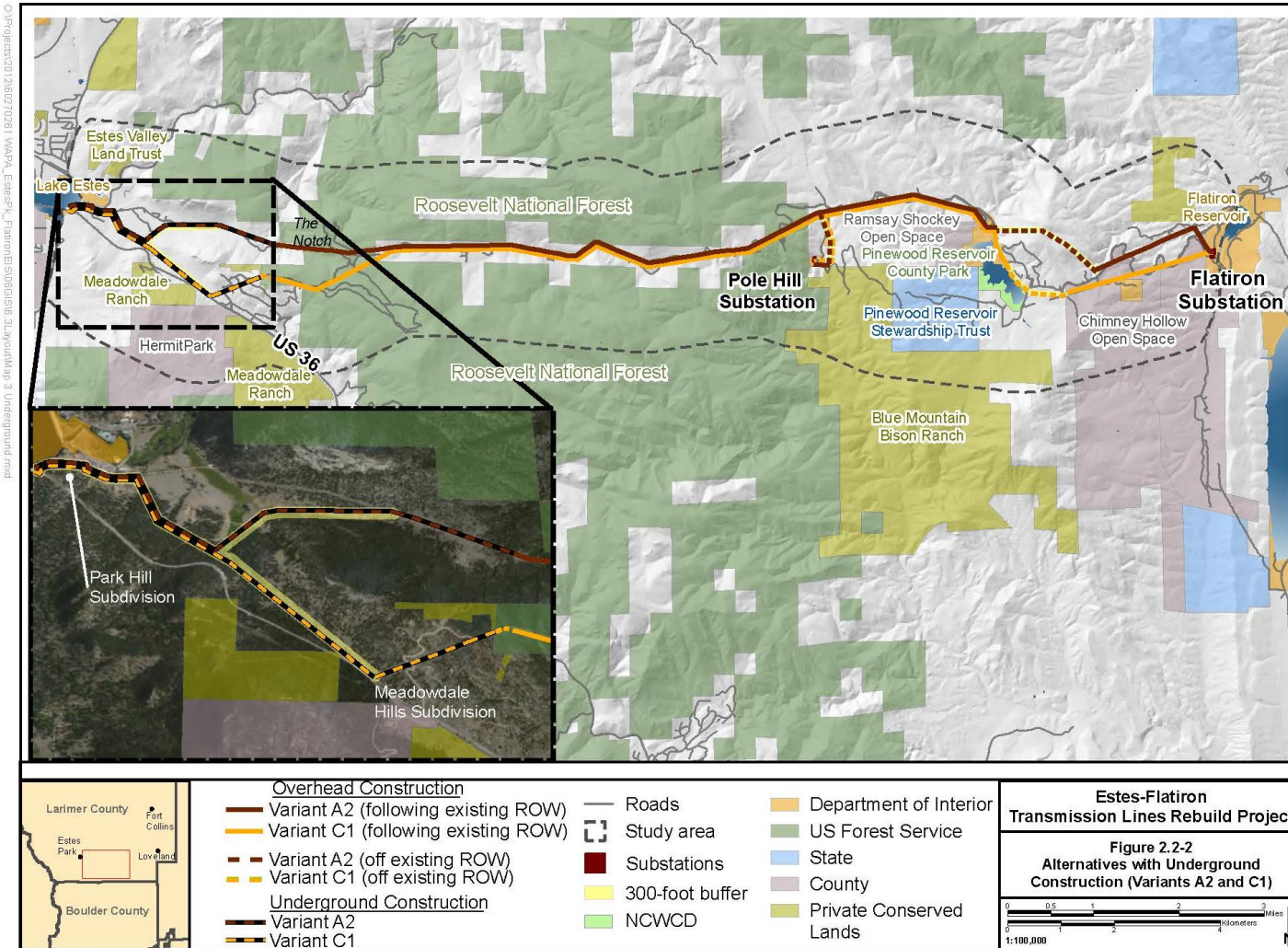
Other Issues

- Impacts on all other identified issues were analyzed, e.g. human health, wetlands, wildlife, and special status species

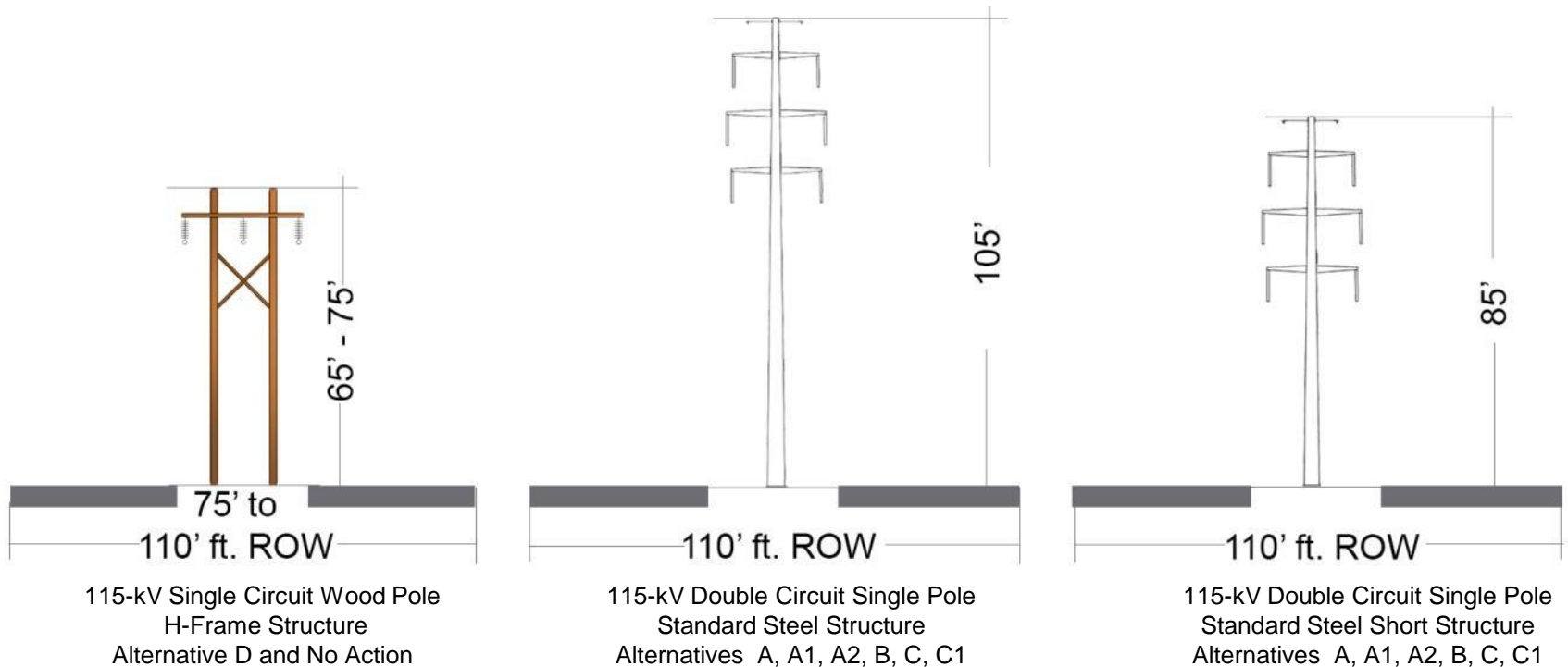
Alternatives



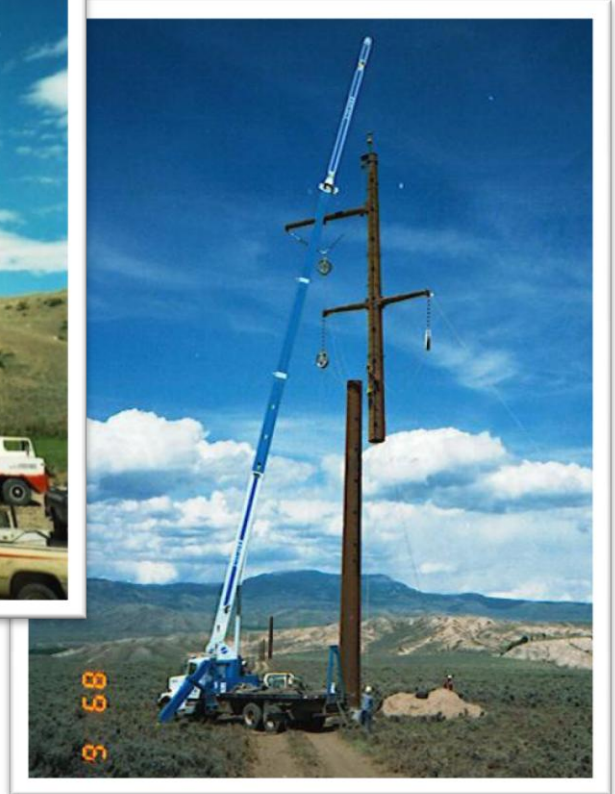
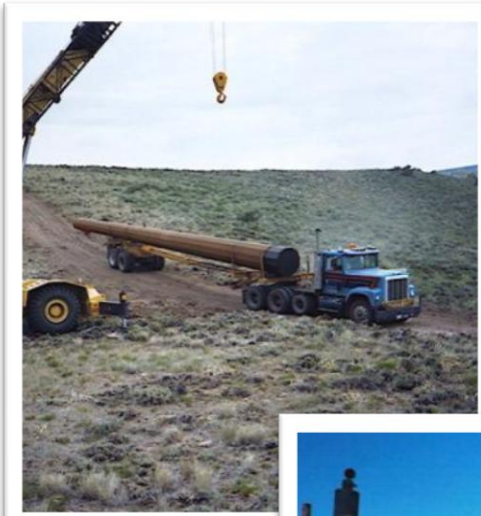
Alternatives



Transmission Line Structures



Above Ground Construction Methods



Underground Construction Methods



Vegetation Management

- Active vegetation management of the ROW is required to meet reliability, public safety and regulatory requirements such as those defined by the National Electric Safety Council (NERC)
- Western is required to take a more proactive approach to vegetation management, one that controls vegetation growth and fuel conditions that threaten its transmission lines
- Vegetation management practices will range from none in areas with compatible vegetation to regular treatments (every 2-6 years) to remove trees and other vegetation that is incompatible within the ROW
- Mitigation measures will be implemented in visually sensitive areas to reduce the effects of vegetation management activities.

Agency Preferred Alternative

- Selection of the agency preferred alternative will seek to balance Western's need for system improvements with environmental and land use considerations
- The agency preferred alternative will be determined after comments on the Draft EIS are analyzed
- Western has not chosen an agency preferred alternative

Land Use Impacts

- Alternative B requires the least amount of new ROW (42 acres), Alternative D the most (177 acres)
- All alternatives except D and No Action consolidate ROW and reduce transmission line length
- The number of landowners affected by ROW construction ranges from 19 (Alt. B) to 48 (Alt. A1)
- All alternatives relocate the existing line located in Newell Lake View subdivision where there is inadequate ROW

Recreation Impacts

- Impacts primarily result from visual changes to the setting
- Alternatives B, C, and C1 would have greater impacts on the setting at Pinewood Reservoir
- Alternatives C and C1 would significantly affect OHV use on a portion of Pole Hill Road

Visual Impacts

- All alternatives would result in minor to moderate adverse effects with localized strong visual changes
- All alternatives except Alternative D and No Action would result in beneficial effects due to ROW consolidation and removal of one of the existing lines
- Alternatives A2 and C1 reduce impacts near Estes Park through underground construction

Other Impacts

- Alternative D would require the greatest amount of new roads on NFS land for permanent access (1.9 miles)
- Alternative D has the greatest distance through NFS lands with difficult construction (1 mile)
- The number of protected area crossings ranges from 4 (.6 miles) to 7 (3.5 miles), with Alternatives D and No Action having the most

Other Impacts

- Sensitive species impacts would be minor
- Potential impacts to wetlands would be minimized through avoidance and limiting any disturbance within 100 feet of a stream
- All alternatives except D and No Action would lower EMF as measured at the edge of the ROW

Draft EIS Process

- **Draft EIS Review**

- Western will hold public hearings and open houses to provide information on the Draft EIS analyses and gather public input.
- Agencies and the public will have an opportunity to comment on the Draft EIS during a 45-day public review period.
- Comments can be provided to Western through mail, email or during the public hearings.

- **Objectives for Draft EIS Review**

- Provide a forum for the public to provide comments on, or to ask questions about, the findings of the Draft EIS.
- Obtain comments on the adequacy and completeness of the EIS, corrections of errors, and input useful for selecting an agency preferred alternative.

How to make your comment count

- Be clear, concise and relevant
- Things to comment on: the proposed alternatives, the assessment of the environmental impacts, proposed mitigation.
- Solution oriented and provide specific examples
- Include facts (e.g. comparative impacts, issues of most concern, information on resource tradeoffs, information on the relative values attached to resources)
- Include supporting rationale that would aid in reaching a decision
- Reference the name of the Draft EIS and include your name, address, telephone number and organization represented (if applicable)
- NEPA isn't a voting exercise -- don't simply provide an expression of preference for one alternative versus another

Next Steps

- Open Houses & Public Hearings:
 - Loveland: October 29th
 - Rialto Theater, 228 East 4th Street
 - Estes Park: October 30th
 - Estes Park Conference Center, 101 South St. Vrain
 - Open house: 4:30pm-6pm Public Hearing: 6pm
- Comment period ends:
 - Comments must be post marked by:
November 14th, 2014

How to comment

- Comments can be made orally at the public hearings, in writing at the drop-in meetings or public open houses, mailed or emailed to the address provided below.
- Send your comments to:

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Western Area Power Administration, A7400

PO Box 281213

Lakewood, CO 80228-8213

Email: RMR_EstesFlatironEIS@wapa.gov

